

Types of Characters and Character Traits

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

characters: the people, animals, or imaginary creatures in a work of literature

main character: the most important character in a piece

minor character: less important character, helps move the action forward and helps readers learn about the main character(s)

character traits: qualities of a character, such as his or her personality

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Identify a main character. Look for the individual who is at the center of the action. In the examples below, Josh is the story's main character.

Step 2: Identify a minor character. Look for an individual who is less important than the main character. A minor character often helps move the action forward and helps readers learn something about the main character. In the examples below, Josh's grandmother is the story's only minor character.

Step 3: Identify character traits. Writers use four main methods to reveal a character's traits:

- **Direct Comments** about the character's personality by the narrator, or storyteller voice.

EXAMPLE Josh was nervous as he got ready to play a piano duet with his grandmother.

- **Physical Description** of a character's appearance.

EXAMPLE Josh sat stiffly at the piano bench. He towered a head above his grandmother. He wore an old suit his grandfather, the jazz player had worn.

- **Speech, Actions, or Thoughts** of a character.

EXAMPLE Josh had spent many hours of practice at the piano. He'd given up fun times with friends. He was always saying, "Sorry, I can't. I have to practice." Now his hands shook as he wondered. "What if they laugh?"

- **How Others React** to the character.

EXAMPLE His grandmother had encouraged him, telling him he had talent. Now she whispered. "Josh? Are you ready to give the world it's beat?" Slowly his confidence returned, and he nodded to the count of four. Grandma winked with pride.